CSREES Portfolio Review Expert Panel Report Summary

Portfolio 3.2.1 Plant Protection
CY 1999-2003

SUMMARY

External Review Completed: March 2005

Portfolio Description

The Plant Protection portfolio is one of two interrelated components of Plant Systems and is diverse in terms of commodities covered. It includes research and extension activities directed at plant protection systems. As defined in this portfolio, Plant Protection focuses on most of the key factors relating to insects, other arthropods, pathogens, vertebrates, mollusks, and weeds that may impact output from plant production and/or pest and disease management systems.   The Knowledge Areas covered by the Portfolio are as follows:

- KA 211 Insects, mites and other arthropods affecting plants
- KA 212 Pathogens and nematodes affecting plants
- KA 213 Weeds affecting plants
- KA 214 Vertebrates, mollusks, and other pests affecting plants
- KA 215 Biological control of pests affecting plants
- KA 216 Integrated pest management systems

Summary of Comments and Recommendations

In 2005 a panel comprised of independent experts from the field was convened to assess and score the current state of the Plant Protection Portfolio. A discussion of specific comments and recommendations related to each of the dimensions of the three Office of Management and Budget (OMB) research and development (R&D) criteria used (relevance, quality, and performance) is provided below.

Relevance

The scope of the portfolio was wide, focused on what is nationally significant, and demonstrated outstanding responsiveness on time sensitive needs. The food safety program is highly focused with most funding going toward research on animal-based food products and infectious agents. However, the work funded through the "formula fund programs" was not represented in the portfolio review document other than total dollars that were included in the research dollar totals.

Quality

The portfolio had sufficient stakeholder input and demonstrated good improvement from 1999-2003 with good alignment in areas such as plant pathology. Some portfolio areas featured the use of cutting edge technology. However, there needs to be a systematic method put into place that reliably gets information to the end-users.

Performance

The portfolio demonstrated high productivity with good agency guidance and leadership. Some productivity evidence was not presented but the Panel is aware of examples that could have been used.

General Comments

The portfolio demonstrated quality work and NPLs were doing a great job given their levels of funding. IR-4 reporting, SARE partnerships, the Plant Diagnostic Network, IPM Regional Centers, and the Invasive Weeds program were areas of particular visibility and success. The honeycomb graphic was creative and useful as an effective tool for describing working relationships and program interactions.

Comments on Future Directions presented by CSREES

First, a new shared vision must be articulated and communicated more aggressively internally and externally. Second, portfolio priorities and programs need to be more visibly tied to and integrated into the issues of global competitiveness, and homeland and biosecurity/food safety issues across the nation. Third, plant protection/production efforts must better link homeland security funds to invasive species. Finally, the Agency should develop a more systematic mechanism for communicating information to end users through local partners and extension at local level.

Data Issues

The CRIS system has subtle but inherent problems and needs to be improved to allow NPLs to retrieve data and PIs to report data with greater ease. CRIS reports make it highly difficult to gather timely information for evaluation, especially in a short review period.

Evaluation Issues

There is an urgent need for evaluation studies to be conducted to assess plant protection activities. It might be beneficial to consult other sources for a more comprehensive and detailed view of projects and programs scope and impacts.

Portfolio Score

Portfolio 3.2.1 received a total score of 80 from the panel. This score places the portfolio in the category 'moderately effective in supporting CSREES objectives.'